



Colorado Association of School Boards
December 11, 2025

Ethically Navigating Conflicts of Interest: From Policy to Practice

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Welcome

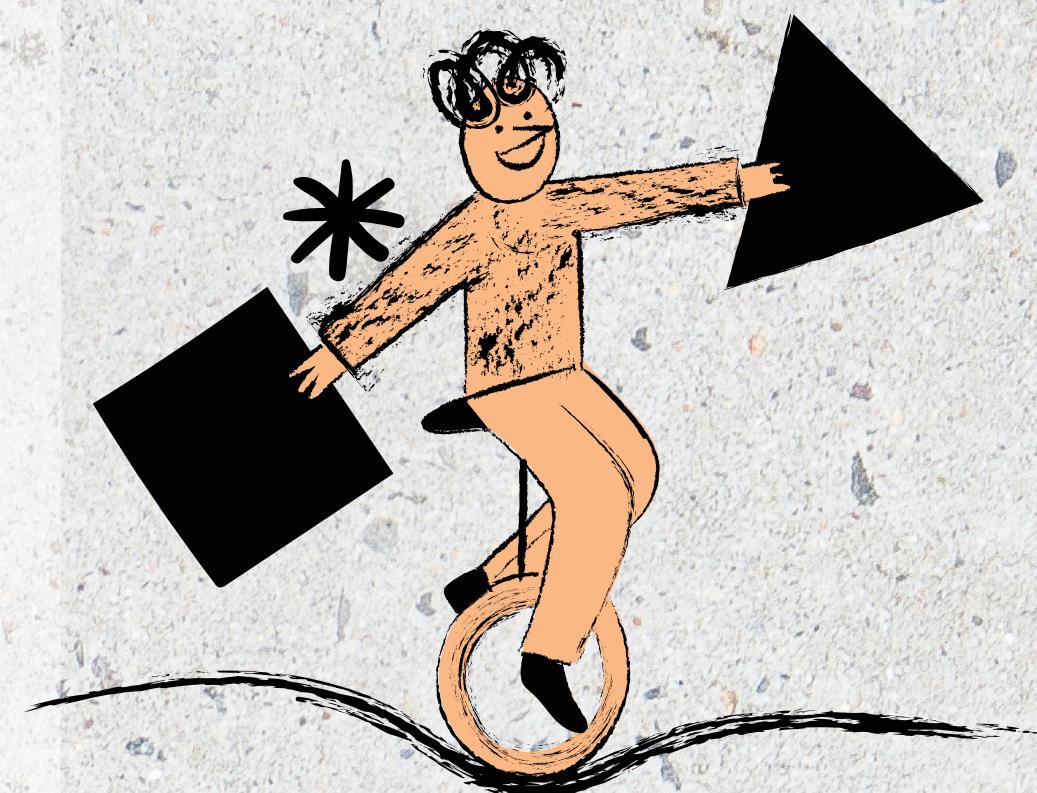
**Elizabeth
Domangue, PhD**

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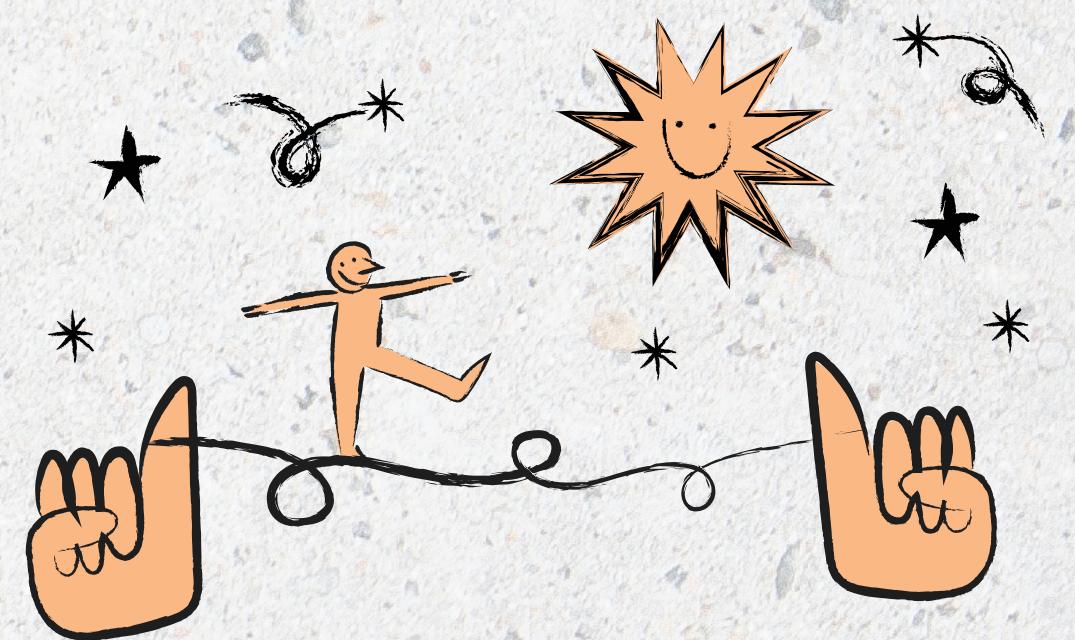
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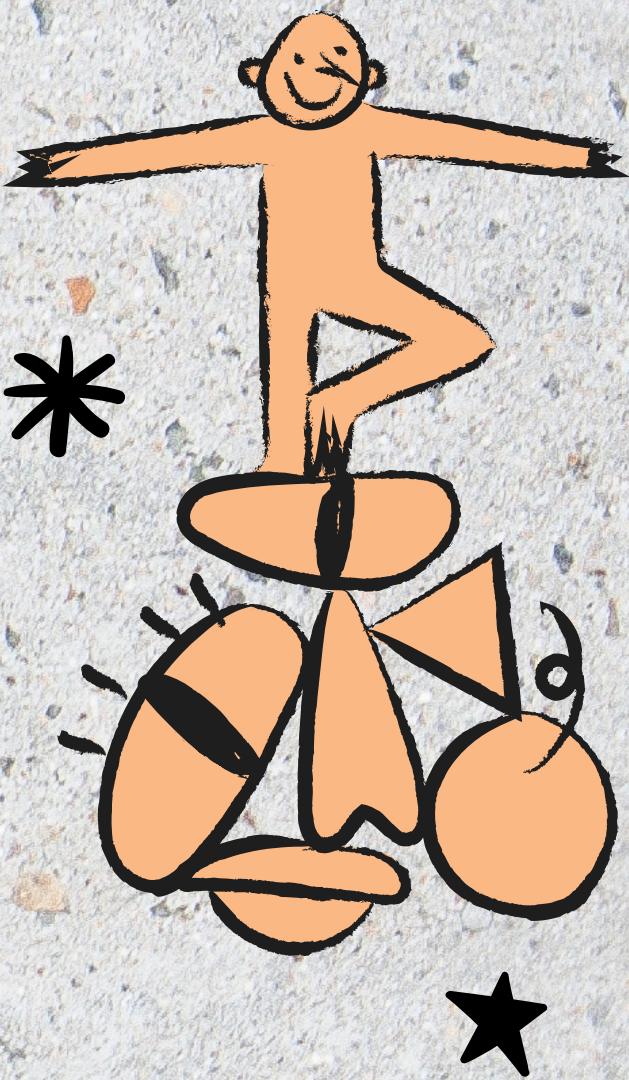
Session Agenda

- Welcome, Introductions, & Objectives
- What does conflict of interest (COI) mean? What does COI mean for school boards?
- A Scenario
- How does your model of governance address COI?(Primary, Secondary)
- Ethics Framework–Daniels Ethics Principles
- Workshop a Scenario
- Strategies for Proactive Governance
- Apply the Learning to Your School District
- Don't Get Stuck
- Closing



Learning Objectives

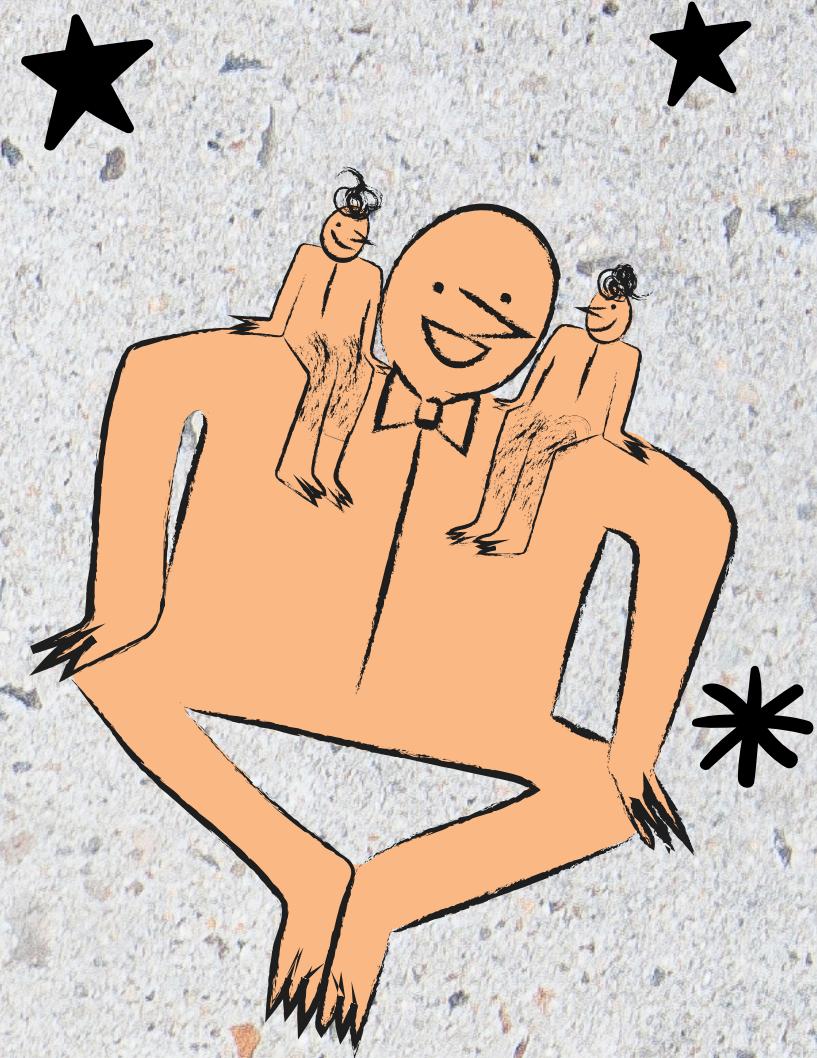
1. Learn practical tools to navigate complex situations with the intent to maintain public trust in governance and school district's actions/decisions. *
2. Explore how to align board policies and practices with real-world decision-making to ensure ethical consistency and assurances.
3. Gain strategies for proactively identifying and addressing potential conflicts before they escalate into public controversies.



*We are not providing legal stance or recommendations.

What Does Conflict of Interest Mean?

CASB sample policy BCB, School Board Member Conflict of Interest defines the term "conflict of interest" as a "personal, pecuniary interest that is immediate, definite and demonstrable and which is or may be in conflict with the public interest."





CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Under Colorado law, board members and district employees hold positions of public trust and, therefore, owe a fiduciary duty to the public. C.R.S. § 24-18-103(1). This means that board members and district employees must carry out their duties for the benefit of the people of the district, rather than as a means of advancing their own personal or financial interests. State law also requires each board of education to adopt a policy relating to board member conflicts of interest. C.R.S. § 22-32-109(1)(y).

Colorado law includes five components governing school board member conduct: (1) general rules of conduct; (2) ethical principles; (3) disclosure requirements; (4) rules relating to a board member's interest in a contract involving the school district; and (5) rules concerning the ability of a board member to serve on a nonprofit entity's board of directors.



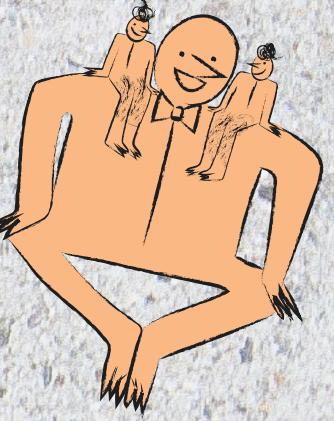
Permissible Conduct:

- A board member may use school facilities or equipment to communicate with constituents, family members, or associates.
- A board member may accept benefits that are an indirect consequence of school district business.
- A board member may serve on a nonprofit's board of directors, and in their role as a school board member, may still vote on matters that may affect the nonprofit entity (in this situation, board members must comply with disclosure requirements in C.R.S. § 24-18-109(5), discussed below under "Service on a nonprofit entity's board of directors").

Prohibited Conduct:

- A board member cannot disclose or use confidential information obtained through their official duties to further their personal financial gain;
- A board member cannot engage in a substantial financial transaction for the board member's private business purposes with a person the board member supervises;
- A board member cannot perform an official act that directly benefits a business that the board member is financially interested in, or a business for which the board member is a counsel, consultant, representative, or agent;
- A board member cannot accept a "*gift of substantial value*," or "*economic benefit tantamount to a gift of substantial value*," which would influence the board member's public duties, or that is intended to reward the board member for official action. This prohibition is often referred to as the "*gift ban*," and prevents board members from accepting money, gifts, and certain financial benefits.

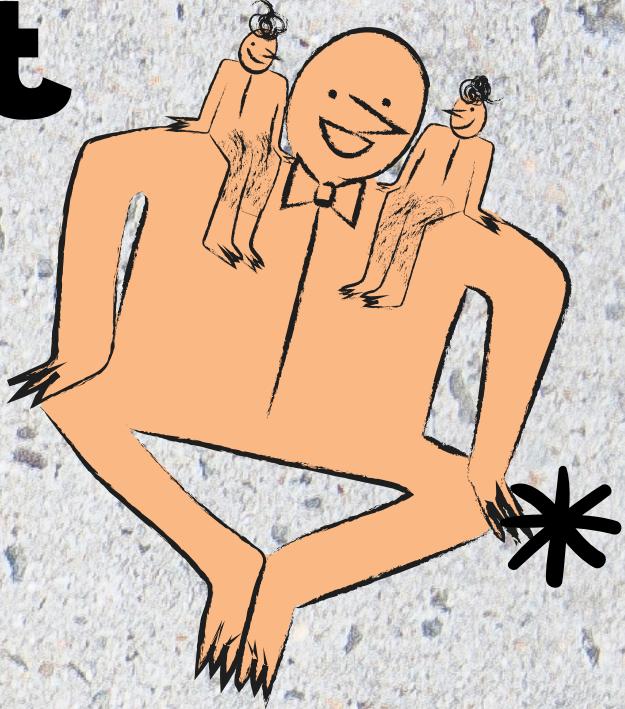
What Does Conflict of Interest Mean for School Boards?

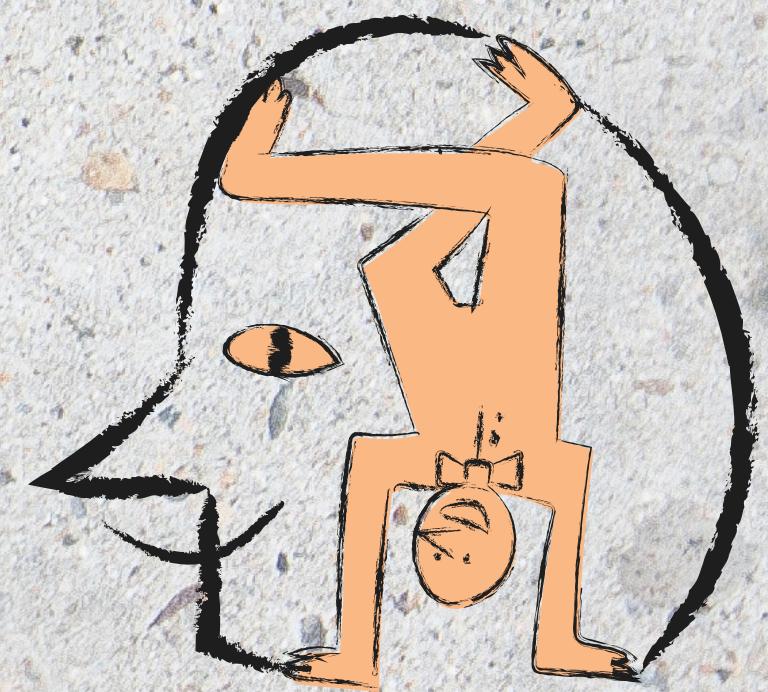
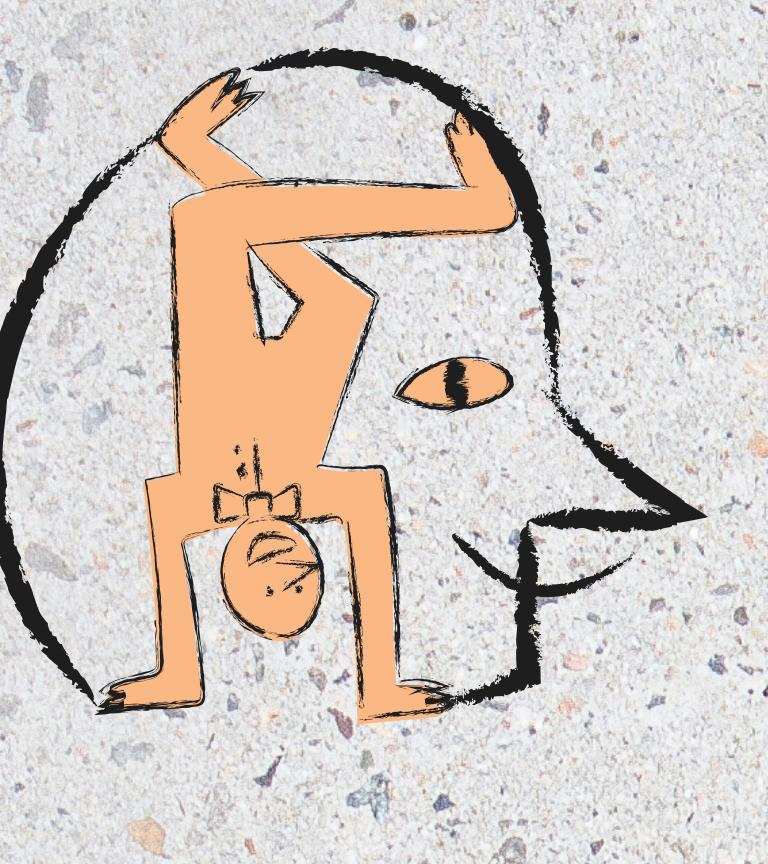


Types of Conflicts of Interest	Definitions	Educational Examples
Actual or Real	Exists when an individual's or organization's interests directly conflict with their public duties, creating a genuine risk that decisions may be influenced by personal or organizational benefit.	Principal's spouse is a teacher in the building and receives a performance evaluation from the principal.
Perceived	When a situation looks or seems like a conflict to others, even if no actual conflict exists. The appearance alone can undermine trust in the official and the organization.	A school board member's neighbor does not like the decision the baseball coach made regarding the starting line-up and wants to talk with the coach.
Potential	Exists when an individual's or organization's private interests could, in the future, conflict with their public role, depending on how circumstances develop or decisions arise.	A teacher is considering running for the school board in the district where they currently work.

What Does Conflict of Interest Mean for School Boards?

Actual	Perceived	Potential



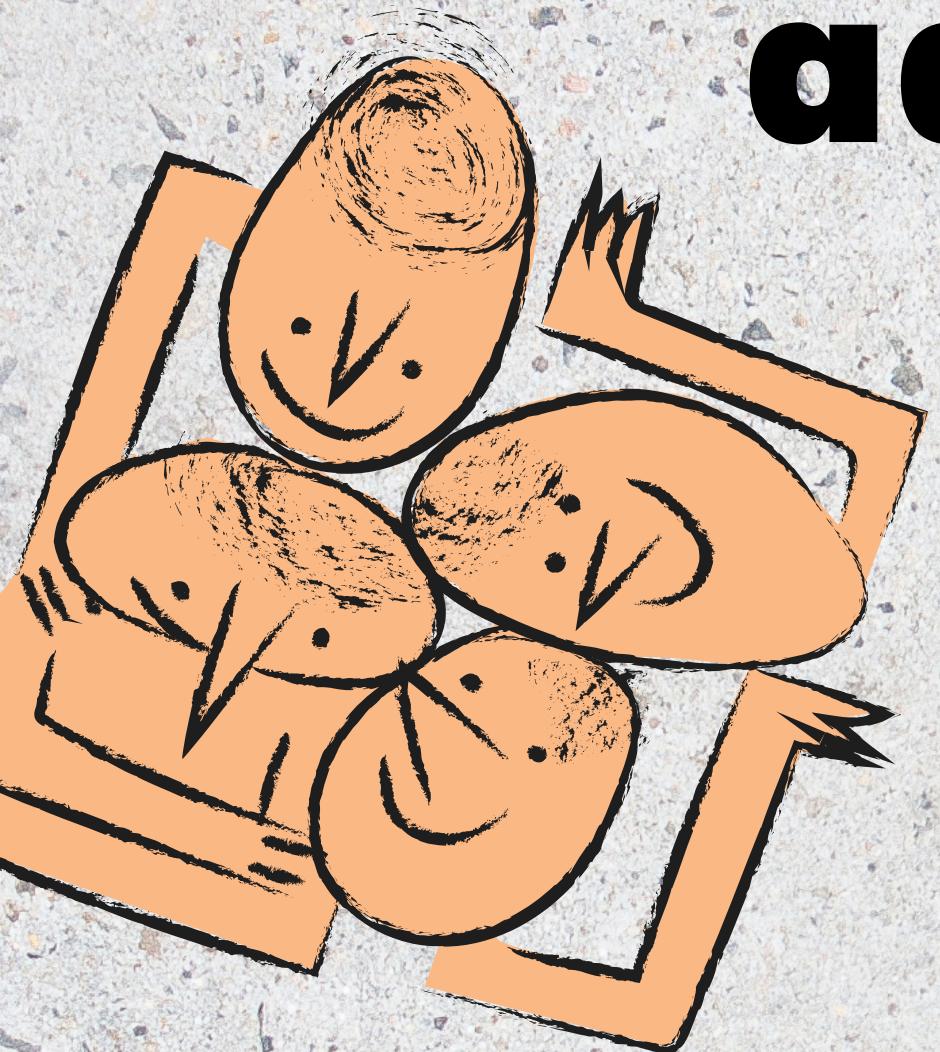


**★ Think about a time
when you have
needed to navigate a
conflict of interest
that was recognized***

*** by the Board, by a
member of the
community, or
internal/external
group? ★**

★ ★ ★

How does your district's model of governance address COI?

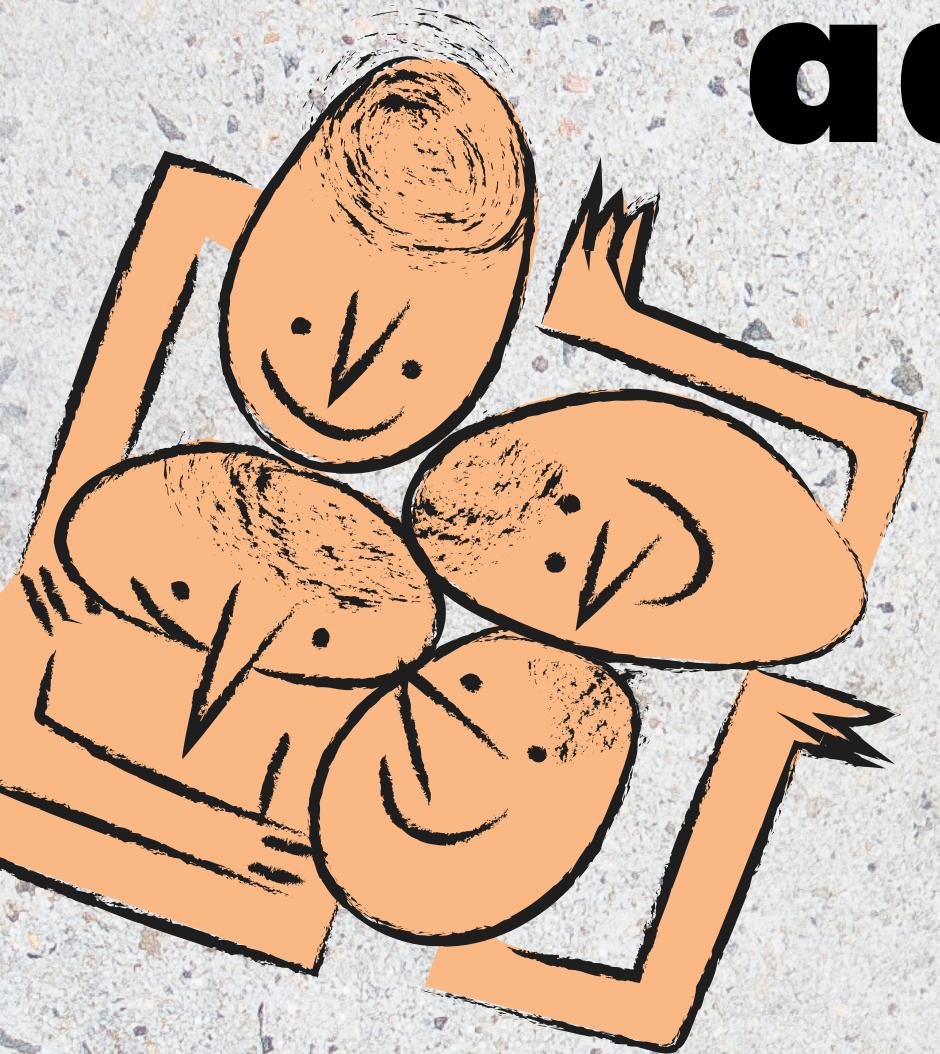


Turn & Talk: How do your current policies and practices address both the legal aspects of both perceived and actual conflicts of interest?

*

★ ★ ★

How does your district's model of governance address COI?



**Examples:
Academy District 20
Summit County**



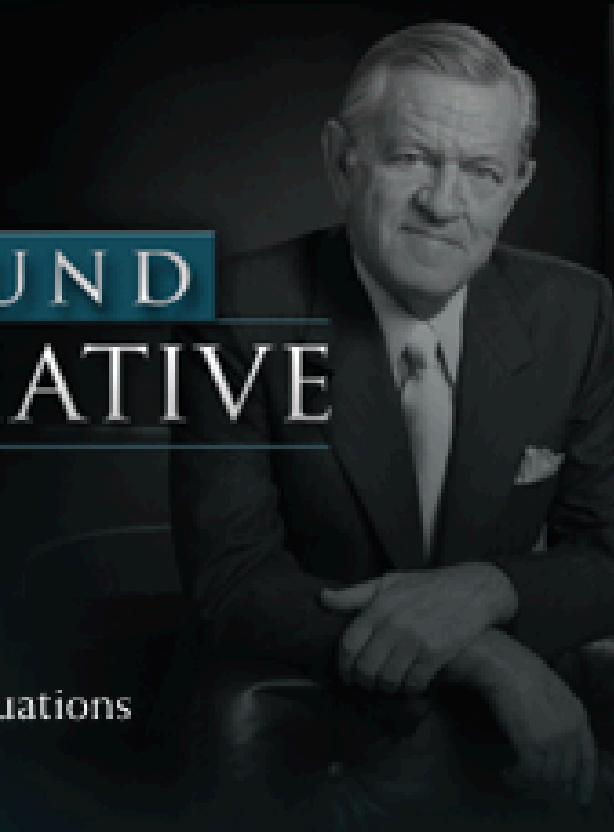
Your Board's Policies are the Floor, Not the Ceiling.

CEILING: WHAT IS POSSIBLE WHEN IT COMES TO POLICIES AND PRACTICES



FLOOR: MINIMUM LEGAL STANDARDS FOR POLICIES AND PRACTICES





DANIELS FUND ETHICS INITIATIVE

PRINCIPLES

Integrity

Act with honesty in all situations

Trust

Build trust in all stakeholder relationships

Accountability

Accept responsibility for all decisions

Transparency

Maintain open and truthful communications

Fairness

Engage in fair competition and create equitable
and just relationships

Respect

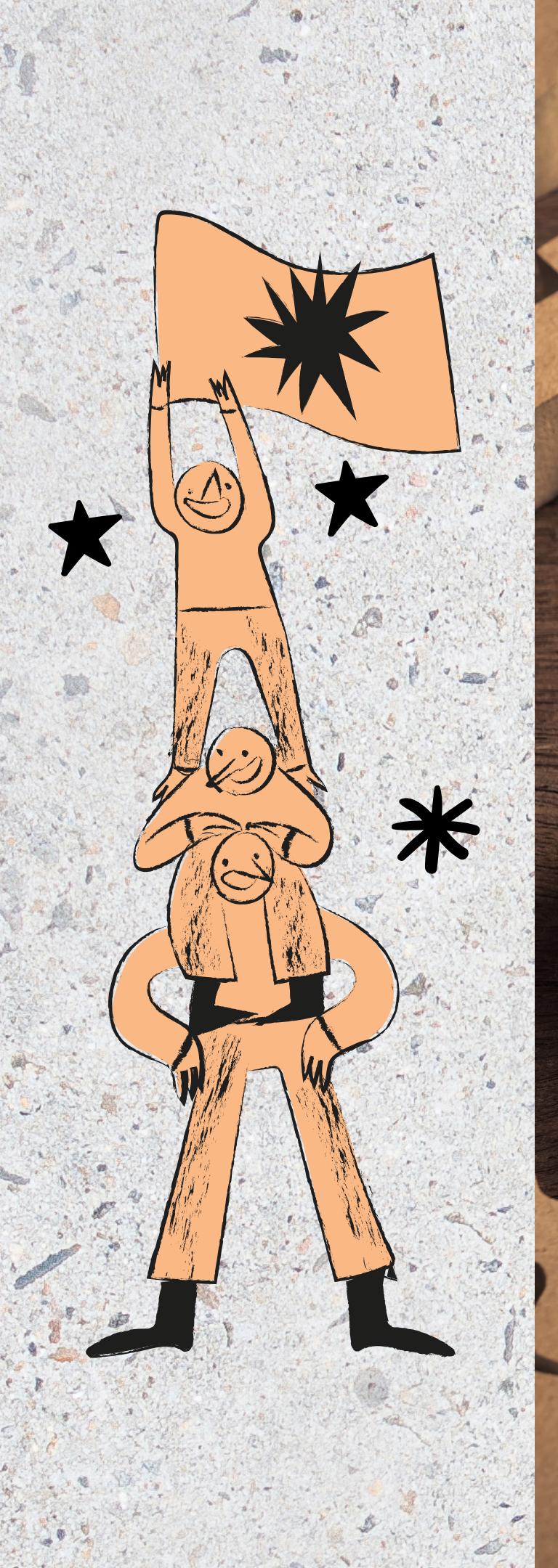
Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others

Rule of Law

Comply with the spirit and intent of laws and regulations

Viability

Create long-term value for all relevant stakeholders



Scenario:



A parent reaches out to a board member (who is a neighbor) about a decision the principal made about a novel that is being used in their class.

1. Identify the conflict type (i.e., actual, perceived, potential; internal, external).
2. What role does policy play?
3. Using the Daniel's principles, how would you respond if this came up during board comments or any point in the meeting (regular or work session)?
4. What would proactive policy and/or board practice look like to prevent this conflict?



Strategies for Proactive Governance

- Annual conflict of interest disclosures (beyond what is required by the state)
- Recusal procedures
- Executive limitations; BSRs (revisited; role of board and superintendent)
- Public communication protocols (sentence frames)
- Board Retreats/Work Sessions Focused on Board Policy and Board/Superintendent Agreements



Strategies for Proactive Governance

- If you could make a change right now to your district's conflict of interest policy or practices with a magic wand, what changes would you make?
- Consider the issue or topic you thought of/discussed earlier, using the Daniel's principles and discussion, how would you approach it now?
- What policies or practices would need to change today, tomorrow, next week, or next month to support best practices?

Don't Get stuck*

- Create and return to policy and Board/Superintendent working agreements
- Seek 3rd-party support
- Legal counsel



Reflections & closure *

What is a key takeaway from today's session?

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Element Collection:

